

Faculty Forum

Volume 1, Numbers 1-13 (1988-1989)

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Terry Nienhuis, Editor



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

VOL. 1, NO. 1

OCTOBER 1988

A Call for Opinions!

Are you pleased with the higher profile teaching now enjoys at Western? Are you confident that teaching is or will be a significant part of university policy decisions? Are there teaching problems not yet widely recognized on campus? Are there teaching strengths not yet widely recognized on campus? This publication will give you an opportunity to express yourself on issues such as these.

On the first of each month we'll publish a short opinion piece about teaching, written by a WCU faculty member. These need not be opinions that command widespread assent. In fact, opinions that are provocative and perhaps controversial will more likely raise the energy level of the dialogue on campus. And that's our main goal: to spark a lively dialogue about college teaching.

Each month we hope to get many responses to these opinion pieces, and on the fifteenth we'll summarize responses in a follow-up issue. This format will encourage a scholarly airing of differences of opinion, somewhat like the "point-counterpoint" section of many professional journals. We'd like to elicit sharp criticism in a context that is constructive, thought-provoking, and intellectually stimulating.

I'm currently talking with two or three faculty members who may be willing to write the first opinion piece, but I'd like to build a backlog for future use. Each piece should be limited to two pages single spaced. Editorial and secretarial help will be available upon request. If you'd consider writing something or if you can suggest issues for others to write about, let me know. A response sheet is attached.

Although this is an introductory article instead of an opinion piece, I'd like to have some responses to publish on October 15. Tell me what you think of this idea. Would some other type of faculty publication be more appealing to you? Do you think such a publication is a wise expenditure of time and money? (Each issue of Faculty Forum will cost about \$38 and may require 30 to 40 person hours.) What do you think of our tentative name for this publication? Can you suggest a better name? Your comments along this line or your reactions to questions like those raised in the first paragraph will be welcome.

The extent to which you respond as a group is the extent to which we can claim a community interested in thinking and talking about teaching. I'm eager to see how many faculty will take the time to respond. If this issue arouses a response in you, write back, whether it be a sentence, a paragraph, or a page.

Terry Nienhuis, Editor

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Jane Hall, Fellow
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Charles Stevens, Fellow

Terry Nienhuis, Editor
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Dear Terry,

Here is my response to the October *Faculty Forum*.

Name _____

Department _____

I am willing to be quoted _____

Please do not quote me _____

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Vol.1, No. 2

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

October 15, 1988

The strength of the response to the October FACULTY FORUM was encouraging, given its introductory nature. I received 13 responses, close to 3.5% of the faculty, thereby smashing the 1-3% average return on direct mail solicitation. Family Publishers Clearing House better watch out!

Responses revealed that the name of our publication is generally acceptable, and the suggestion to include practical teaching tips was made so often that we decided to include a teaching tips section with the publication of responses each month. Thanks to all who responded and to all who commented informally.

Excerpts from Faculty Responses

From J. R. Nicholl, English: I appreciate and respect the attention and \$ being given to teaching. I'd like to see some department have the nerve to pair up its faculty for class visits for a semester or year, to help one another improve as teachers. Departments ought to have a mentor program, at least for new faculty.

From Rita Noel, Administrative Services :

As a new teaching professional, it would indeed be helpful to participate in some sort of dialogue with others. As much as the philosophical issues would be stimulating, perhaps practical aspects would also help the survival rate and the blood pressure of we who have recently joined your ranks!

From Fred Hinson, Biology: I would like to suggest that in your publication from time to time you include a list of faculty and their activities as they pertain to teaching, such as short courses, seminars, or conferences. This would enable faculty to interact with other faculty about topics on teaching. Faculty participating in such activities also might be encouraged to give a seminar for other WCU faculty.

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From Linda DelForge, Biology

I'm very pleased that discussion of teaching--even teaching of freshman courses--is again "respectable."

Having been an editor in at least two capacities, one on a journal editorial board and the other generating pieces as you have here, I fully appreciate the difficulty of getting busy people to respond. . . . Have fun, even if you do not match the "Dear Abby" column.

Dan Pittillo, Biology

FACULTY FORUM may be read more widely if 2 or 3 major points were attractively displayed on the page. In its present form I believe it is more likely to get tossed. I am attaching some examples of developmental information sheets that I use with parents. Although the field and topics are different, I believe a similar format would be helpful. I appreciate the work all of you are doing.

Davia Allen, Home Economics

It seems to me that an interesting issue to which you may address a session is the DIVERSE programs on campus to which other or DIVERSE STRATEGIES of excellent teaching apply. I am sure that excellence in teaching takes place in studio, laboratory, stage and recital hall situations, which differ from the situation in lecture courses or courses in other areas. While studio teaching has unique features, it also has commonalities with teaching in other areas, but it may be of interest to focus on the diversity of strategies.

Perry Kelly, Art



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
VOL. 1, NO. 3

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA
NOVEMBER, 1988

The Tyranny of the Textbook

Why don't our students find our disciplines to be as interesting as we think they are? Why do our students spend so little time reading course-related materials? Why do so many of our students believe that learning is a matter of memorization rather than a matter of understanding? There are many factors to be considered in answering these questions, but one clear culprit is the textbook.

What is wrong with textbooks? Textbooks have too much influence on instruction, especially in lower division and general education courses. The typical textbook is comprehensive but superficial. It focuses on coverage of information rather than on conceptualization of the content. To maintain its market share, it is pitched to the middle of the road and avoids authentic controversy. It generally is written to impress the instructor with its completeness and recency, not to provide effective pedagogy to help the student. Textbook authors tend to do the analysis and synthesis of ideas for students. Thus textbooks rob those students of the opportunity to think through problems and fail to stimulate the curiosity of the reader. Textbooks give students the idea that there is a canon of revealed truth in a discipline.

In addition to being bad in themselves, textbooks have other negative influences on instruction. First, they constrain the nature of the content of the courses. It is too easy for an instructor to design the syllabus around the textbook chapters. If the textbook is conceptually oriented, that is not likely to be harmful. But a conceptually oriented textbook is a rarity indeed. Second, instructors frequently feel compelled to "cover" the whole book. As a result, time is not taken for useful diversions, student questions, oral communication, or in-depth analysis by instructors or students. Finally, because textbooks tend to be information-laden rather than conceptually oriented, the focus of instruction is on the acquisition of isolated knowledge rather than higher-order processing. Why do we bombard students with hundreds, maybe thousands of pieces of information from textbooks

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when we know that a year later 90% of the information will have been forgotten outright and much of the rest will be remembered in a distorted fashion? As a result, students retain precious little information, and they have no conceptual tools for thinking about or acquiring new information.

Some reviewers of an earlier draft of this comment thought it might not be sufficiently controversial to elicit discussion. Maybe that is so. Maybe most everyone agrees with me. But if that is so, why is the bookstore full of the kinds of textbooks I have been talking about? Besides, even I often don't act as if I agree with what I have said here. For most of us, the use of comprehensive textbooks is a habit. We have always taught (and been taught) that way. Some of us blame the book rental system for our behavior. But how many of us make full use of the supplemental purchase option or our very fine library? Some of us like the multiple-choice test questions that are packaged with textbooks. While there is nothing inherently wrong with multiple-choice questions, good ones are difficult to write and the ones that accompany textbooks are usually the sorriest representatives of their kind. They provide a poor excuse for adopting a textbook approach. My guess as to why most of us use general textbooks is that the idea of teaching a course without one is simply too threatening

What can we as faculty members do about this state of affairs? When we can find them, we can use textbooks that are organized around the major concepts and issues central to an understanding of our fields, not ones that promote the unreflective transfer of information. Alternatively, topical textbooks rather than mini-encyclopedias can be used or the instructor can assign selected parts of textbooks along with extensive supplemental readings. Or, instructors can take advantage of commercial services that allow development of course-specific collections of readings. Faculty members can also begin to take on the admittedly entrenched practices of the textbook publishers. We can critically review manuscripts when given the opportunity, adopt textbooks that are unconventional, or even submit our own alternatives. In short, we can self-consciously attempt to overthrow the tyranny of the typical textbook.

Bruce Henderson, Psychology

Terry Nienhuis, Editor
Faculty Forum
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Dear Terry,

Here is my response to the November *Faculty Forum*.

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Department_____

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol.1, No. 4

November 15, 1988

The number and quality of responses to Bruce Henderson's "The Tyranny of the Textbook" was immensely gratifying. We received 10 responses, all with substance and many filling a page or more. In addition, a number of people have commented informally. Of the respondents, five agreed with Dr. Henderson's position wholeheartedly, two disagreed--one "vehemently"--and three were mixed. (All opinions that we print belong solely to the authors, and our printing of an opinion entails neither approval nor disapproval of its content or style.)

Excerpts from Faculty Responses

I liked it.

I couldn't have said it better myself.

However, my text in general ed., Geography 103, is "conceptually structured," and the students still gripe and read it as little as they can get away with. **Ralph Triplette, Geosciences**

I am angry and insulted!

I have written textbooks;

I am writing one;

I have and am teaching without one;

And I disagree with Bruce vehemently!

I would like to write a rebuttal to share a different perspective.

Jim Carland, Accounting

If faculty read the textbook in lieu of creative lecture, students are worse than bored: they are disgusted. If faculty synopsise main points from the textbook in lecture, students tend to review their lecture notes when preparing for exams and never open the book at all. I believe that both faculty and students need to regard most textbooks as information resources, "cookbooks," if you will, that provide a foundation for creative thinking and discussion in the classroom and beyond.

Sharon Jacques, Nursing

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Without an assigned textbook, most students are immediately uncomfortable with what they perceive as a lack of structure, and only the best students ever adapt positively.

Walt Foegelle, Health Services Management

Thanks to
Ann Jacobs,
Glenn Liming,
Dan Pittillo, &
an anonymous
administrator
for additional
comments.

In advanced courses it may be different, but in the general education courses too many students regard the courses as irrelevant and as something that should be gotten through in the easiest way possible.

There is considerable cutting of classes.

The textbook is useful
to those students
to study for
exams.

In general,
I find the longer
I teach a course the further
away I get from following the textbook
and to many students that is very upsetting.
Arden Horstman, Geoscience and Anthropology

While working on my BA in English at UNC-CH years ago, I took an Introduction to Folklore class and was surprised when I learned that the majority of our assignments were from library reserve readings. We rarely used our textbook. As a typically lazy and irresponsible undergraduate, I initially resented having to do so much "legwork" in the library. Gradually, however, I

grew to feel responsible for my work. Somehow I realized that there is more to school than textbooks, that if I wanted to do well in the class I could get off my duff and do the work assigned to me. In retrospect, it seems almost like a rite of passage, like discovering the difference between a magazine and a scholarly journal. I learned more in that course than in any other I've ever taken.

John Creech, Library



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 1, No. 5

December 1, 1988

Textbooks, Teachers, "Tails," and Tyranny

A Rebuttal to Bruce Henderson

In the November 1 issue of Faculty Forum, Bruce Henderson published a scathing denouncement of textbooks. In that epistle he attacks textbooks because they have "too much influence on instruction." He goes on to list a myriad of ills attributed to the development and use of college texts. I take issue with that position. There are good texts, mediocre texts, and some as poor as the portrait Bruce paints. However, the poor must be few in number because textbooks must continually "pass muster" in order to survive. Unless a large number of faculty choose to adopt a book, it will fail and disappear from the market. In fact, this is precisely the fate of the vast majority of books and is one reason that so few undertake the task of writing a text. Nevertheless, textbooks can no more tyrannize teachers than tails can wag dogs.

It seems to me that Bruce's complaints are indictments of teachers rather than of textbooks. Any teacher who abrogates teaching responsibility to a text is a poor teacher indeed. It is the teacher's job to ensure that students leave a course with understanding and knowledge rather than with a collection of facts which will be soon forgotten. Bruce complains that textbook authors, "tend to do the analysis and synthesis of ideas for students." The amount of analysis contained in a given text is a function of the target market; however, I am puzzled by the term synthesis. No text can synthesize ideas for a student; not even the instructor can do that. I am also puzzled by Bruce's comment about conceptually oriented texts. I certainly don't know any other way to organize and present material than from a conceptual basis. Nevertheless, conceptualization is the primary reason that education requires instructors.

I cannot accept carte blanche condemnation of the textbook industry. Clearly, there are problems in the industry. Chief among these are the lag time for publication (2 years), the difficulty in finding good reviewers, and the lack of expertise possessed by editors. Further, writing a text wins a single line in the vita and counts no more than a journal article with respect to TPR despite the fact that a text can consume many times the effort. Writing does not generally pay well because few texts really sell significant numbers of books. With all these problems

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one might wonder why anyone ever actually writes a text. Clearly, people would not write unless they felt strongly about the subject matter and were convinced that they could make a contribution to the field.

Authors of textbooks make every effort to produce useful, clear and complete texts which will be valuable in an educational environment. Publishers also wish to avoid poor books, but their editors do not have the expertise to judge ultimate value. Consequently, they depend on reviewers who teach in the specific field to provide evaluation and insight. Furthermore, editors do not dictate content. Any author is free to make any approach desired. Few editors, however, will proceed to publication on a text which the reviewers have not endorsed. Although the author may wish to include controversial material, it is likely to be criticized by the reviewers and therefore excised by the editor. At any rate, no text is "pitched to the middle of the road." In this day of specialization there is no such thing as a "middle of the road." Each text is designed for a specific market by author(s) and editor in consultation, and reviewers are chosen to represent that market.

Admittedly, the target market of a particular text is not always apparent. Publishers and authors frequently do not disclose that information for fear of discouraging a prospective adopter. It is critical, therefore, for instructors to perform a thorough review of prospective texts: a quick reading of the table of contents will not suffice. This does present a problem at Western because our text rental policy discourages publishers' reps, who work on commission, from visiting the campus. Those who still call on us decry our policy and wonder why we have not adopted a procedure of purchasing a minimum percentage of all adoptions from the publishers as have the other rental schools. I wonder why also. This is an area of major concern. I would invite faculty to unite in asking Business Affairs for a policy of 50% purchase of new books on all adoptions. In the meantime, all of us will have to pay particular attention to the catalogs and brochures provided by publishers and rely less on sales reps.

Bruce ends his attack by recommending that instructors do a better job of text selection and review of manuscripts. He even suggests that we consider writing ourselves. I heartily echo these recommendations. Even if nothing financial comes of the effort, it will certainly develop an understanding of the problems and challenges and will eliminate "text thumping" attitudes while it develops better and more critical reviewers. It can also make us better scholars because it will force us to approach a course or discipline in a more meticulous manner. It has often been said that the best way to learn a subject is to teach it. I suggest that writing a text is even better.

Jim Carland
Department of Accounting & Computer Information Systems



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
Vol. 1, No. 6

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA
January 15, 1989

Responses to Jim Carland's December FORUM, "Textbooks, Teachers, 'Tails,' and Tyranny" were spirited, as the excerpts printed below demonstrate. Overall, it appears that our first semester with the FACULTY FORUM has been a great success. Many faculty are now referring to the publication in casual conversation and it appears that the FORUM is read by many with considerable interest. Two new opinion pieces are nearly ready for publication, but we encourage all faculty to submit opinion pieces as the spirit moves them. It would be a happy problem to have too many pieces to publish. I also encourage you to submit teaching tips for the middle of the month issue. These practical suggestions can make our daily teaching work much easier, so send over your most helpful tip today!

Excerpts from Faculty Responses

The pieces by Bruce and Jim were interesting and informative.
I have found the following to be a valuable guide (source unknown):
"The general principles of any study you may learn by books, at home;
but the detail,
the colour,
the tone,
the air,
the life which makes it live in us,
you must catch all these from those in whom it already lives."
Thus the teacher. . . .

Gary Pool, Chemistry/Physics

I'm tempted to continue the debate, but, in the interest of brevity, I'll forgo the fun. The last two lines of Jim's rebuttal are, "It has often been said that the best way to learn a subject is to teach it. I suggest that writing a text is even better." This advice is as appropriate for students as it is for teachers, and it captures my concern about textbooks. If teachers deepen their knowledge by tackling the challenge of finding structure and organization for their material, then students likewise will learn more when they wrestle with raw material. But that doesn't leave much of a market for textbooks, does it.

Bruce Henderson, Psychology

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Charles Stevens, Fellow

It seems to me that what is true of textbooks in one field may not be true in another. Thus, sweeping generalizations should be avoided. Bruce Henderson and Jim Carland may both be correct even as they disagree.

Lee Minor, Mathematics

Well, it's good to see that some of the faculty are not asleep! I think Jim Carland's rebuttal to Bruce Henderson's point on textbooks was well expressed.

Dan Pittillo, Biology

Jim has done an admirable job of defending his position. One argument omitted is that the text provides a common resource for all students in the class. It allows them to share individual thoughts, questions, and concerns from a common base of knowledge. It also permits them to return again and again to read and re-read material until true understanding occurs. Unlike primary resources, it does not presuppose knowledge of the field or of research strategies (a point especially important to beginning students in a field).

Finally, a good textbook provides a coherent framework for attacking a large body of knowledge. It does not replace the need for teacher organization and structure but can enhance such organization and structure. It also does not replace the need for reading primary sources, which most teachers require in addition to the text. In short, good textbooks are indispensable tools for teachers and students.

Anonymous Administrator

I commend both Dr. Henderson and Dr. Carland, one for directing faculty attention toward the problems of overdependence on texts, and the other for reminding us all that we should (1) review textbooks with scrupulous care, and (2) write better textbooks where they are needed.

Steve Eberly, English



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Vol.1, No. 7

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

February 1, 1989

WHO TEACHES ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY?

I admit guilt; I tricked my class even though they were a pleasing group. On Thursday morning when I walked into class we were all in high spirits because of the forthcoming fall break. I asked the class if any of them were going away for break. More than 90% said yes. How many are leaving Friday? Lots of hands went up in response. How many are leaving today (Thursday)? Many hands went up. How many have Friday classes? Several faces turned red and several eyes looked down. I gave them my usual little speech explaining how I did not understand paying tuition and then trying to get less in return for their money and the taxpayers' investments.

As their initial embarrassment began to wane and courage returned, their defense began: "but my __ class was canceled"; "but my ____ professor called class off"; "but my ____ class voted not to have class." The students were at least partially exonerated since they were not the guilty parties. We were. This scenario is not new and with the evidence of the past I suspect it will occur again at spring break, at Easter, at final examination time, at

A sense of personal commitment and personal accountability are qualities that we ought to instill and/or nurture in our students as we assist in their preparation for responsible careers and citizenship. But are we instilling these qualities when we cancel classes before vacations? Are we nurturing these qualities when we become lax with the "W" policy? In the fall of 1985, for example, we gave 2,649 W's, 1,069 after the free period. This adds up to around 7,947 credit hours (this might be good "business," but is it sound education?).

Some argue that the students lead complex lives. Perhaps this is a justification in part, but why does a commitment to academics seem to appear so low in their list of priorities? Is it maybe because we encourage it? Our cancellation of classes, for example, seems to condone and reinforce a "what can I get out of" attitude. Clearly we as faculty contribute to the malady even if our only contribution is silence.

Over the last few semesters I have been pleased by a sense of small but real improvement in the performance of my freshman classes. Once again I find myself using some of the more challenging exam questions which I had to shelve some years back, and I sense a growth in our students' academic potential. However, I do

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not sense a corresponding maturation in their attitudes toward academic endeavors. The college experience should help students improve attitudes of commitment and accountability. Do this and maybe in years to come we will experience more than a 50% voter turnout in national elections.

Recently, two advisees reported that they were receiving "W" grades in the tenth week of the term in spite of the "W" policy which eliminates free "W's" after the fifth week. The first advisee, a freshman, said, "My _____, _____, and _____ courses do not require any studying. This has made me lazy, so now I am failing my _____ course and need to withdraw from it." The second advisee, a sophomore, said, "My freshman year was just like high school and I got by doing the same things that I did in high school. But this year my courses are so different; it doesn't work now." These students could have resolved to buckle down, turn things around and fulfill their commitments, but it was too tempting to take advantage of the free escape that the late "W" now represents.

These unsolicited, poignant, somewhat acrimonious statements from young students impressed me. I believe students anticipate that college will be different from high school, and I think we can offer them something which is truly different, capitalizing on and satisfying their expectations by expecting responsible, mature academic commitment and behavior from them.

When the "W" policy says that the free "W" ends in the fifth week, we can impress students with our commitment to this rule and the principle behind it. When we approach vacations we can impress upon students that responsible adults meet their obligations until their obligations are truly completed. When students see that we respect our own academic responsibilities as well as theirs, they may begin to do the same.

Gary Pool, Chemistry/Physics



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Vol.1, No. 8

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

February 15, 1989

Responses to Gary Pool's February FORUM, "Who Teaches Academic Responsibility?" were more numerous and spirited than any responses we have received so far. Sixteen faculty responded and one response was three pages, single spaced! We regret that we can't print more of the responses since the dialogue they create is rich and valuable, but hopefully the excerpts below will give everyone some sense of their flavor.

Excerpts from Faculty Responses

I share Gary's frustration and concern. I find the situation especially distressing among part-time students who tend to believe that part-time matriculation means part-time instead of full-time effort.

Walt Foegelle, Health Sciences

I wholeheartedly agree with Gary Pool's thesis. It is deeply discouraging to be seen as an ogre because I live up to what I regard as a serious commitment to my students and to the university.

Joan Byrd, Art

The fact that 1,069 W's were given after the "free period" does not necessarily indicate that they were improperly given. The Record specifies that students shall receive a grade of "W" after the drop period if (a) they are passing or (b) they withdraw from the university. The only improperly assigned "W" would be one given to a failing student after the first one third of the semester. But the more important issue is what a "W" represents. It is merely a statement that the student did not finish the course. It should not be inflexibly construed as an escape from or shirking of responsibility. We are an educational, not a penal institution. Students should not be punished because they overestimate the number of hours they can handle, have some serious personal problems, or simply decide that the learning experience in a particular class is not what it should be.

Bill Hyatt, Criminal Justice

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The implementation of the "W" policy varies widely from college to college because a variety of factors lies behind "W" grades, such as (1) the operation of the Registrar's office, (2) the philosophy of advising or counseling, and (3) the philosophy of discipline. Faculty responsibility regarding "W's" grows out of our philosophy of advising and will hopefully fit together with the individual student's situation. Following a regulation just because it is there will not necessarily get anyone to vote for anything. Perhaps showing that a quasi-governmental system like a college can respond to individual needs might encourage both responsibility and participation.

James Syphers, Social Work

I confess! I admit it! Alas, my past has reared its grotesque head and my sins are laid bare. Yes, I, too, cut classes before vacations when I was an undergraduate. I didn't mean to shirk academic responsibility. I never dreamed that it would lead to. . . to this. I guess the responsible thing to do now is to call the University of Tennessee and tell them I'm sending back my M.S. and Ph.D. They were earned under false pretenses.

Jeff Neff, Geosciences/Anthropology

Since I have started requiring attendance in basic mathematics courses the success of my students has significantly increased. Students can take up to 4 absences for personal reasons, and the 5th results in an "F." The students must accept the responsibility of saving absences for serious problems, or for special cases such as the Friday before a major break. What to do about students who request a "W" after the deadline, but who do not have serious, extenuating circumstances? I occasionally find that a student who is denied a "W" will put forth the necessary effort to earn a passing grade.

Charles E. Mitchell, Mathematics & Computer Science

The lessons of academic responsibility are taught throughout high school and college as the student becomes more and more independent, and are built on the foundation of individual responsibility which is learned throughout life. If we have to start teaching individual responsibility at this late date, chances of success are severely minimized. To thrust the concept of academic responsibility as a totally new concept upon a college student, as opposed to a logical extension of previously known behavior, is like putting a player into a football game as quarterback when he has no idea of the rules of the game.

Richard Wohlman, Mathematics & Computer Science



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
Vol. 1, No. 9

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA
March 1, 1989

GOOD RESEARCHERS ARE GOOD TEACHERS: A MYTH

There is a well-established myth that good researchers are good teachers, but empirical evidence shows no necessary relationship between research and teaching. Researchers reviewing studies between 1970 and 1985 have found no evidence of a positive or negative relationship between research and teaching (bibliographic information available upon request). Correlational studies simply do not support the hypothesized, supportive relationship between research and teaching.

Jens-Jorgen Jensen suggests that the relationship between teaching and research is more complex. This Danish author posits that the relationship varies, depending on teaching level and discipline. Research is more likely to be related to graduate teaching than undergraduate teaching, particularly in the sciences. In the humanities, research and teaching are less related, though the relation that exists is manifested more consistently across graduate and undergraduate lines.

Why, then, do otherwise knowledgeable people continue to believe in and spread the myth? David Webster suggests a simple explanation: we would like it to be true. He suggests that we maintain the myth to support what we like to do--research--instead of doing what students, parents, and legislators want us to do--teach. To justify to ourselves that we are meeting students' needs (and parents' and legislators' expectations) we convince ourselves that research is directly related to teaching. That way we do not have to feel guilty about taking time and other scarce resources away from students. We kid ourselves that our research is really in the best interest of our students and that enhancing our research enhances our teaching. How cozy! Unfortunately, the empirical evidence indicates that enhancing research does not necessarily enhance teaching. It may, but it also may not.

Lewis Elton raises a more serious, systematic argument. He states that we have asked the wrong question. He asks, "how are teaching and research related to scholarship?" Elton argues that teaching can be related to "scholarship" if we understand the true meaning of "scholarship."

The current model of the research university, imported into the United States when Johns Hopkins University was founded in 1876, is based on three concepts in the German ideal of the university. These concepts are academic freedom for faculty, freedom of learning for students, and "science." However, the

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interpretation of the third concept, "science" ("Wissenschaft" in German), is problematic.

Harold Perkin writes that Wissenschaft "was not a thing but a process, an approach to learning, an attitude of mind, a skill, and a capacity to think rather than a specialized form of knowledge." He adds, "*Wissenschaft*, far from denoting natural science, lay much nearer to the traditional humanism inherited from the medieval university." Similarly, Lewis Elton uses the word "*Naturwissenschaft*" to indicate the difference between scholarship and our concept of science, stating that "*Wissenschaft* contains notions of scholarship from the humanities point of view, but that notion of scholarship is absent from *Naturwissenschaft*."

What Perkins and Elton are suggesting is that at this point scholarship and research diverge. The qualities of scholarship or "*Wissenschaft*" are more appropriate to teaching, a process, than to research, which is generally thought of as a product. The assumption that good researchers are good teachers is based on a misunderstanding of the historical development of scholarship and research.

Research implies a tightening of focus while scholarship pertains to breadth. The reason that teaching might relate to scholarship is that it takes the breadth of scholarship to develop master teachers while the sharp focus of research, though important, does not generate the knowledge or skills of a master teacher.

The teacher is not a phonograph, playing back bits of information which he has gathered hither and yon. Rather he is personally responsible for having encountered the world of knowledge and for having fashioned out of this encounter something called subject matter. (Pfnister, 1970, p. 228)

What differentiates scholars from researchers is the breadth of knowledge from which scholars manufacture a subject matter to teach to students, a subject matter that is an individual creation of the mind. As researchers narrow their focus to understand the detail revealed by their methodology, they move further away from manufacturing a subject matter that is pertinent to the student, particularly the undergraduate student.

The tension between research and teaching has existed in United States universities since the late 1800s. It is unlikely that we are going to resolve the issue easily. However, blind adherence to mythology does not contribute to scholarship, research, or teaching. Western Carolina University's Role and Mission Statement asserts that scholarship can be manifested through teaching, service, and/or research. Perhaps it is time to take a hard look at our mythologies, practice the diligence that we preach, and inform all of our activities with scholarship.

Bill Kane, Management and Marketing



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
Vol. 1, No. 10

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA
March 15, 1989

The responses were excellent to Bill Kane's March FORUM, "Good Researchers Are Good Teachers: A Myth," and they show that the opportunity for dialogue brings out the best in our community of scholarship. Bill has obviously created discoveries and insights we might not have had without the stimulation of his essay. If you didn't get around to responding, it's not too late. We'll try to include additional responses in a future issue..

Faculty Responses

Yet again Bill Kane has impressed me not only with his excellent scholarship (Wissenschaft, in the sense in which it was discussed in his article) but also with his insightful handling of difficult ideas. I was particularly taken with his discovery of David Webster's explanation for other-wise knowledgeable persons continuing to believe in and spread the myth that there is a positive correlation between good teaching and research:

it is what they want to believe so they can continue to justify what they want to do.

Marvelous! It explains so many questions I have had about so many of my colleagues over the years. Thanks for a job worth doing and a job well done.

Jim Horton, Biology

It is my experience that educators who are excellent, persistent learners often stand out as fine teachers. This suggests that either research or scholarship (as Bill Kane has discussed them so provocatively) is a reflection of inquiry.

The distinction, thus, between research and scholarship may not be an especially useful one in this case. It is the intensity of personal learning that I would look for in a colleague to teach at my side.

Bruce McPherson, NCCAT

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Kane teases out some important issues and shows that confusing the relationship between teaching and research can contribute to the perpetuation of myths. He has identified at least two important conceptions of an effective teacher:

- (a) a generator of subject matter (by this he means a curriculum), and
- (b) one who has not only mastered needed competencies but learned when and how to apply them to students, especially undergraduate students.

I would add one more conception--a possessor of a desirable personality trait, namely, social interest. Herein lies the real difference between a teacher and a researcher. Whereas the teacher's ultimate goal is directed primarily toward student achievement, the researcher's goal is directed toward personal achievement. Where there have been instances of researchers using students in their studies, the students rarely benefit from the findings and they are often disenchanted by promises which lead only to the researcher's name in print.

Following Kane's lead of taking an argument to its logical end, as he did in tracing the course of the master teacher, how then should we address the course of the researcher? The Naturwissenschaft? If enhancing research does not enhance teaching, what then does it enhance?

I submit that the research effort enhances the ego of the professor. Thus, teaching is essentially sociocentered while research is ego-centered.

William Chovan, Psychology

Excellent! Dr. Kane did a great job focusing on an important issue for our university

*Clarence DelForge,
Elementary Education & Reading*

Jeff Neff, Geosciences and Anthropology, submitted two reviews of Profscam, a recent book sweeping academe and scandalizing the general populace. Here are a couple of excerpts from the reviews. Which view is more accurate, do you think?

"Notwithstanding abundant lip service to the contrary, teaching plays little role in decisions on promotion in our major universities, and so it naturally tends to be slighted by aspiring academics. Citing several cases where professors who received awards for distinguished teaching had been passed over for tenure, Mr Sykes insists that the contemporary 'academic culture is not merely indifferent to teaching, *it is actively hostile to it.*'"

"Profscam is criticized by some academic leaders as being anti-intellectual, simplistic, and poorly done. By focusing on the abuses by a few professors at some very large institutions, the book insults all hard-working, dedicated teachers across the country."



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 1, No. 11

April 1, 1989

Lighting the Way to Real Learning: A Student's View of Good Teaching

How do good professors splash color across their subject and make it come to life? What is the secret of their success? It is not just the knowledge the professor has acquired, for if you ask students, they will more than likely be able to tell you a tale of woe concerning a dull professor and a complex course. It is not merely the ability to entertain, for an entertaining professor does not always inspire real learning. When word gets out that a particular professor is outstanding in his or her field, students flock to the professor's class. There is a certain amount of magic involved when one experiences the joy of real learning and not just the mindless exhortation of facts. The scholastic enemy, apathy, is defeated, and the joy of real learning is experienced.

The secret is love. Good professors love their students. They want desperately for their students to love them. This relationship cannot be established without original feedback from the students, which encourages students to actively participate. Students begin to shy away from their usual apathetic approach and original thought takes place. Acceptance becomes a key factor and a subconscious message of "I'm okay, you're okay" slips across.

Good professors love their subject. They bring to their lecture a positive emotion which ignites curiosity. Students will be more inclined to tentatively explore a subject when they see a genuine interest on the part of the professor.

On the other side of the fence, an incompetent professor can be the ruination of scholastic achievement. It is the sad lack of enthusiasm for the educational process as a whole which takes the joy out of learning.

What makes a professor incompetent? It is an immense lack of originality. Professors become mechanical when they spit out information with no spice or fervor. There is, likewise, no affection for the students. Students become just faces in the sea of humanity, drowning in a storm of apathy.

Granted, students are responsible for their own enlightenment. However, professors act as a lamp which lights the way to knowledge. When a student collides with a deficient professor, the result is the reign of apathy.

Ultimately, there is no substitute for a truly good professor and no excuse for an incompetent one.

Caron Collier, student

Caron Collier is a sophomore honors student majoring in English. Her interests include writing for the *Western Carolinian* and working on the *Nomad* staff. This essay originally appeared in the *Western Carolinian*.

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Additional Responses to the March Faculty Forum

After our last issue went to press, we received a few more responses to Bill Kane's provocative essay, "Good Researchers Are Good Teachers: A Myth." In keeping with the Forum's editorial policy of airing all viewpoints, I am pleased to publish these additional responses. If your opinion has not yet been voiced, it's only because I haven't heard from you.

Terry Nienhuis, Editor

I did not respond initially to Bill Kane's March Forum because I was sure that in an academic community such as ours there would be a large number of faculty writing in the defense of research. In the March 15 issue, however, each article (as well as the article by Bill Kane) seems to subtly imply that research is undesirable and unimportant and that researchers are self-centered.

At Western, teaching is our most important responsibility; but without research, there would be nothing to teach. Even if we had subject matter to teach, we would not know how to teach it. Without past research, there would be little knowledge for us to pass on; and without current research, there will be no new knowledge to add to the curriculum. Without research, there will be no solutions to the great social, economic, and environmental problems faced by our world today. It is clearly the responsibility of each institution wanting to call itself a university to contribute new knowledge to each of the various disciplines taught there.

Richard Stephens, Mathematics

I heartily disagree with Bill Kane, not so much in principle as in terms of practice. First, the article and the responders are clearly attempting to support a counter-myth, that non-researchers are better teachers. Why perpetrate (or perpetuate) the counter-myth? Could it not as easily be said that this counter-myth is what some people want to believe so they can continue to justify what they don't want to do? How many of us really pursue Bill's Wissenschaft instead of doing research, and how many of us go home and mow the yard or play tennis or . . .? And secondly, isn't Bill sharing with us the fruits of his RESEARCH?

I speak out for the scholar researchers because without them I have no curriculum. Over my years of teaching they have most stimulated my enthusiasm and my students' enthusiasm for learning. Who are they? To name quite a few, look at the faculties of the three departments which have won the Chancellor's Unit awards. If you want to get a list of some of the better teachers on campus, I'll bet their names show up on the list of nominees for the Graduate School Research Award.

Gary Pool, Chemistry/Physics

I disagree with my colleague William Chovan about the difference between teachers and researchers. Research effort can indeed enhance the ego of the professor but so can teaching, and in a much more direct way. Furthermore, research can also be socio-centered, especially research conducted collaboratively with students. Indeed, there are many "personality traits" that are shared alike by teachers, researchers, and teacher-researchers.

Most of us have been educated at the graduate level so that the conduct of research has become part of our professional identities. It may be that the way we were educated is not the ideal preparation for a teacher at a place like WCU, but I believe that conducting research is one way for an individual to acquire knowledge and attitudes that enhance scholarship. Bill Kane's original point is that scholarship may or may not be translated into teaching effectiveness. There are other routes to scholarship, but research involvement is a defensible one. Research becomes a problem only when it is not kept in perspective.

Finally, I suggest that everyone read Profscam. I think Sykes is on target more than he is off. Some criticisms apply to what we do at WCU and some criticisms of the research universities do not apply to us but still imply what we could emphasize to make us distinctive.

Bruce Henderson, Psychology



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
Vol. 1, No. 13

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA
May 1, 1989

What Have We Done? Dialogue Builds A Community of Scholarship

In our first issue of the *Faculty Forum* last October, we announced that our purpose was "to raise the energy level and spark a lively dialogue on campus about college teaching." A dozen issues later, we see encouraging signs of elevated energy and scholarly sparks; we think we have seen a community of scholarship in action. We have debated whether textbooks help or hinder learning and whether the teacher's attitude toward W's, missed classes, and vacations has a significant effect on what we are trying to teach. We have heard a student voice define excellent teaching, and we have shared specific and practical teaching tips--advice on what we might do next Monday to make the classroom more effective.

Given the tension that exists between research and teaching, it was perhaps inevitable that some would interpret our work as a call to choose sides, but such was never our intent. That this issue arose so soon was not premeditated but a natural and wholesome product of what we achieved, "a scholarly airing of differences of opinion." These philosophical differences are not likely to be resolved easily; but if they are, it will be only through open discussion. If a conflict between teaching and research undermines our work at WCU, the conflict should be resolved, and the first step is open dialogue. If there is no conflict and no problem, the dialogue will settle that and we can put the tension behind us.

With your help we have created a vigorous forum, a medium for open discussion of issues crucial to WCU faculty. People are talking about these issues in the hallways, in the parking lots, and in committee meetings; apparently many are reading the *Forum* and not simply routing it from the mailbox to the circular file. The number of people who have responded to each issue, the number of unsolicited manuscripts we have received, and the amount of visibility achieved implies that the effort is worth continuing.

As we close down for this academic year, we are already looking forward to the next. A number of opinion pieces are in the works already, and we are looking for more. The *Forum* will be a success when faculty demand more issues in order to get their opinions aired, when we have more responses to each issue than we can possibly publish, when just about everyone looks forward to each issue, when the

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dialogue over the *Forum* is evident everywhere on campus--in short, when it mirrors and excites our sense of community.

One of William Blake's proverbs says, "you never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough." Is it possible to have too much dialogue? Is it possible to have too much community spirit? Is it possible to care too much about teaching excellence? Write us today. If the *Forum* hasn't voiced your concern, it must be because we haven't heard from you. Give us an opinion about some aspect of the teaching life at WCU. Tell us what works in your classroom. Tell us what you see as the problems confronting us as teachers. The campus community is waiting to hear from you.

Terry Nienhuis, Editor

If there are a number of responses to this final issue, we will print them in August during the first week of classes.